

From: Lester Hightower
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/7/01 8:48pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

To whom it may concern:

I would like to express my concern that the DOJ's recent settlement with Microsoft is ludicrous. Microsoft is a clear monopoly with unprecedented power over the largest growth sector of the US economy. That monopoly must be broken, but the settlement that has been proposed does quite the contrary -- in many ways it actually helps to extend that monopoly!

The settlement provides Microsoft explicit protective barriers against the one segment of the computer industry that has demonstrated some hope of ability to compete with it, the Free Software/Open Source/Linux community.

Rather than re-hashing a well written piece on that topic I will ask that you read this short article by Robert X. Cringely:

<http://www.pbs.org/cringely/pulpit/pulpit20011206.html>

Additionally, the part of the settlement requiring Microsoft to donate computers to schools -- that is just as insane. The US school systems are one very small segment of the US computer industry, but one segment where Apple's Macintosh computers have continued to compete successfully with Microsoft due to Apple's superior simplicity, reliability, and the fact that grade schools are not in the "must have Microsoft Office" jail that 99% of all US businesses are. Having Microsoft give computers to grade schools will serve to harm Apple's position in that market, it is in perfect harmony with Microsoft's efforts to destroy Apple's position in that market, and it is giving Microsoft a huge tax break to boot!

The government needs to force Microsoft to open source all of its operating system products, which are no different than cable TV or telephone switch standards (OSes are an infrastructure standard), force Microsoft to publicly disclose the file formats for each and every product that it sells, before they are allowed to go to market, force Microsoft to change its software licensing agreements so that they are transferable (create a market for used Microsoft software), and force Microsoft to publicly disclose any additions or modifications that its products make to current and future communications standards (like HTTP, FTP, SMB, etc.) so that others can make products that inter-operate or compete.

Remedies such as those will actually accomplish something positive.

Sincerely,

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Lester H. Hightower

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